

Hispanic Immigrants and Citizens in Virginia

Secretary Tavenner, Chairman Watkins, distinguished members of the Commission, Good Morning. My name is Qian Cai. I am the Director of the Demographics and Workforce Section of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia, and I am grateful for this opportunity to present key findings from a study we recently completed on Virginia's Hispanic immigrants and citizens.

Most of the presentations before the Commission to date have addressed specific policy or legal issues, and programmatic implications of unauthorized immigrants in Virginia. This presentation will be somewhat different. Chairman Watkins asked me to present a broader view using the demographic data about Virginia's immigrant population. As you heard from an earlier presentation by JLARC, one in every ten residents in Virginia is foreign-born. Among them, 40 percent were born in Asia, and 36 percent were born in Latin America. Since JLARC has done a comprehensive study of Virginia's foreign-born, in our study, we focused on Hispanic immigrants, comparing them to their Hispanic citizen counterparts, and to the Commonwealth's population overall. I hope the results of this study help to broaden your understanding of Virginia's Hispanic population, and set a context for your deliberation as you move toward making recommendations.

The data we analyzed are from the Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey, 2006 Current Population Survey, and decennial censuses from 1980 to 2000. Since neither the federal census nor other Census Bureau surveys ask questions about immigration status, our study of Hispanic immigrants include both those authorized and unauthorized. As you know, authorized immigrants include green card holders; people with valid student, worker, business and visitor visas; and refugees and asylees. Unauthorized immigrants include those who entered without inspection, and those who were legally admitted but stayed past the date they were required to leave.

1. **Size and Distribution.** Virginia's Hispanic population tripled between 1990 and 2006, from 152,000 to more than 460,000. Today, Hispanics account for more than 6 percent of Virginia's population. A total of 188,000 Hispanic immigrants were identified in the 2006 American Community Survey, up 43 percent from 132,000 in the 2000 Census. The distribution of Hispanic population, however, is highly uneven in the state, concentrating in the state's three major metropolitan areas and selected rural areas.
2. **Definition.** In this study, we use the term "Hispanic citizens" to refer to those of Hispanic origin living in Virginia with citizenship. We use the term "Hispanic immigrants" to refer to non-citizen, Hispanic people living in Virginia with or without authorization.
3. **Citizenship.** More than half of Virginia's Hispanics are U.S. citizens, with a majority being U.S.-born, and 13 percent naturalized. The remaining 40 percent are non-citizens, residing here with or without authorization (a current, valid

document allowing their residency in the U.S.). Among Hispanic children under age 18, 85 percent were U.S. born, 3 percent are naturalized citizens, and only 12 percent are immigrants.

4. **Years in U.S.** Two-thirds of Hispanic immigrants have been in the country for ten years or less, and 44 percent of the total have been in the country five years or less.
5. **Age Structure.** More than 72 percent of Hispanic immigrants are between the prime working and reproductive ages of 20-45, compared to 36 percent in the overall population. 60 percent of those Hispanic immigrants are male. This suggests opportunities in the labor force as a strong motivation for immigration.

As for Virginia's Hispanic citizens, one-half are under age 20, compared to only slightly more than one-quarter in the overall population.

6. **Language.** 53 percent of Hispanic immigrants do not speak English well or at all. Among the recent arrivals (within five years), 69 percent do not speak English well or at all. That percentage, however, drops significantly to 44 percent for those living in the U.S. for 6 to 10 years.
7. **Education.** Educational attainment is measured among adults age 25 and over. Forty-three percent of Hispanic immigrants, age 25 and over do not have a high school diploma, and 15 percent have a bachelor's or graduate degree. In comparison, 15 percent of Virginians do not have a high school diploma, and 33 percent have a bachelor's or graduate degree.

Hispanic citizens have very similar educational attainment to the overall population, with slightly a higher proportion (35 percent) than the overall population having earned a college or graduate degree.

8. **Labor Force Participation.** Labor force participation is measured by taking the population (age 16 and over) and determining who is either currently working or looking for a job. 68 percent of Virginians age 16 and above are in the labor force. This compares to labor force participation rates of 80 percent for Hispanic immigrants, and 74 percent for Hispanic citizens. Further broken down by gender, 90 percent of the male Hispanic immigrants are in the labor force, compared to 74 percent for the overall male population. The difference between female immigrants and overall female population is much smaller, 65 percent vs. 62 percent.
9. **Occupation.** Hispanic immigrants represent nearly 15 percent of employees in construction and farming in Virginia. Food preparation and serving, installation, maintenance and repair also employ many Hispanic immigrants, all larger than their share in the overall labor force, 3.4 percent.

Hispanic citizens' share in each occupation sector, on the other hand, is more aligned with their overall share in the labor force with one particular exception of military.

10. **Military Service.** More than 6 percent of Virginia's military employees are Hispanic citizens; and 3 percent are Hispanic immigrants. The Hispanic population is over-represented in the military compared to its presence in the overall population.
11. **Poverty.** 15 percent of Hispanic immigrants, and 12 percent of Hispanic citizens live in poverty, compared to 10 percent of the overall population.
12. **Welfare.** The Census Bureau's Current Population Survey identifies recipients of various social welfare program benefits including GED training; nutritional programs for women, infants and children (known as WIC); job search programs; job training; child care assistance; transportation assistance; and work program for cash assistance. Hispanics received benefits (and were over-represented) under only two of these programs: WIC and job training. Of nearly 61,000 WIC recipients, 14 percent were Hispanics. Of 17,000 job-training recipients, 7 percent were Hispanics. (Due to small sample size in CPS, Hispanic citizens and immigrants are combined)
13. **Subsidy.** The Current Population Survey also asks about various public subsidy programs including public housing, rent and energy subsidies, food stamps, and free and reduced price lunch for children in public schools. Hispanic households are over-represented in uptake of both rent subsidies and free and reduced priced lunch, accounting for 20 and 16 percent, respectively, of the total recipient households. In the remaining three categories (public housing, food stamps, and energy subsidies) however, Hispanic households are under-represented.
14. **Health Insurance.** 57 percent of Hispanic immigrants, and 27 percent of Hispanic citizens, lack health insurance, compared to 14 percent statewide. Hispanic immigrants and citizens account for 13 and 7 percent, respectively, of the total uninsured.
15. **Household Income.** In 2006, the median household income for Virginia households was \$55,500, compared to \$62,800 for Hispanic citizen households and \$48,300 for Hispanic immigrant households.
16. **Housing Costs to Income.** Hispanic immigrant households spend, on average, 31 percent of the household income on rent or mortgage, compared to 22 percent for Hispanic citizen households, and 23 percent for Virginia households overall.
17. **Living Arrangement.**

One-third of Hispanic immigrant households, and 13 percent of Hispanic citizen households, average more than 1.5 persons per bedroom, compared to 7 percent for Virginia households overall.

27 percent of Hispanic immigrant households, and 15 percent of Hispanic citizen households contain non-relatives, compared to 9 percent of Virginia households overall.

The average Hispanic immigrant household size is 3.6, compared to 2.8 for their Hispanic citizen counterparts and 2.5 for Virginia households overall.

18. **Transportation.** Like the population overall, most Hispanic immigrant workers drive to work. However, 9 percent of more Hispanic immigrants take public transportation, compared to 4 percent of overall population and 5 percent of Hispanic citizens.

Among those driving to work, 39 percent of Hispanic immigrants, and 15 percent of Hispanic citizens, carpool, compared to 13 percent of the overall population.

To summarize:

Hispanic Immigrants

- 40 percent of Hispanics in Virginia are immigrants, including both authorized and unauthorized; the remaining 60 percent are U.S. citizens.
- Hispanic immigrants are less educated, poorer, more likely to lack health insurance, and live in larger households than the overall population.
- Despite their lower income levels, Hispanic immigrants and their children receive little welfare other than WIC and school lunch subsidies.

Hispanic Citizens

- Hispanic citizens speak English well and adults are slightly better educated than the overall Virginia population.
- Households headed by Hispanic citizens have higher household income than Virginia's households overall.
- Hispanic citizens have similar occupation distribution to the overall population and are over-represented in Virginia's military.

Last but not least, as we discuss the issue of unauthorized immigration, it is worth noting that not all unauthorized immigrants in Virginia are Hispanics or Latinos. Nationwide, more than 20 percent of unauthorized immigrants come from Asia (13 percent), Europe and Canada (6 percent), and Africa and other countries (3 percent). According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's latest report, the top ten sending countries of all unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. includes Mexico (57 percent), El Salvador, Guatemala (each 4 percent), Philippines, Honduras, India, Korea, Brazil, China (each 2 percent), and Vietnam (1 percent). While immigration from Mexico continues to dominate unauthorized population growth, the greatest

percentage increases during 2000-2006 were among immigrants from India (125 percent), Brazil (110 percent) and Honduras (75 percent).

Thank you. I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.